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ABSTRACT

This collection of papers is a review of the adult literacy projects in Australia funded under the 1987-89 Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC) of the National Policy on Languages. Fourteen authors describe various literacy projects and, often, their outcomes. The projects described are grouped in seven areas. On the subject of Literacy Training and the Workforce are "New Start" (Neil Baudinette); "Taking Basic Education to Work" (Elizabeth Compton); "Nature of Communication in the Workplace" (Jean Searle); "Literacy Competence of Young School Leavers" (Specific Learning Disabilities Queensland Inc.); and "Expansion of Literacy Services" (Linda Are). The topic of Literacy Training and the Electronic Media includes "Adult Literacy through Video" (Marie Persson) and "Community Service Advertisement for Regional Television" (Ursula Stephens). The next two sections cover "Literacy Training in Isolated Areas" (Cherrie Hawke) and "Literacy Training in Residence" (Chris Stewart, Rosa McKenna). A section on Literacy Training and Aborigines contains "Aboriginal Reading Resources" (Susan Sim) and "Project Read" (Julia Knight). The topic Literacy Training and Women is represented by "Women and Work Literacy Resources" (Susan Sim). The final section, Literacy Training and the Disabled, contains "Literacy for the Intellectually Disabled" (Julia Knight) and "A Student Group Support Project" (Sharon Coates). Appendixes list national and state-level ALAC projects and names and addresses of the authors. (KC)

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AUSTRALIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON LANGUAGES AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

OCCASIONAL PAPER

NUMBER 3

ADULT LITERACY ACTION CAMPAIGN: PROJECTS AROUND AUSTRALIA

A review of state and territory level adult literacy projects funded under the Adult Literacy Action Campaign of the National Policy on Languages

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PREAMBLE

This review of adult literacy projects around Australia funded by the Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC) is the third in a series of Occasional Papers prepared by the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME). AACLAME advises and assists the Government with the implementation of the National Policy on Languages and assesses its effectiveness.

ALAC is one of six major elements of the National Policy on Languages. It is a campaign to improve levels of adult literacy in Australia involving expenditure of $1.96m in each of 1987-88 and 1988-89.

The campaign has two elements - a national level one and a state level one. This paper describes some of the worthwhile projects that have been funded under ALAC in the states and territories as part of the state level element. Projects funded under the national level element are listed, with brief descriptions, in Appendix A.

FOREWORD

AACLAME'S publications schedule envisaged that certain documents would be regular and frequent : VOX, UPDATE; others regular but infrequent : the Annual Report; and still others not necessarily regular nor frequent. The 'occasional papers' were seen to fill the third category but have turned out to be quite regular and frequent. So far two have been issued:

. *Illiteracy in Melanesia: A Preliminary Report* by D T Tryon, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University 1988

. Submission to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training in response to the Green Paper on Higher Education

Submission to the Inquiry into Asian Studies and Languages in Higher Education

AACLAME Discussion Paper on the possible creation of a National Institute of Languages

This third paper is a review of the adult literacy projects funded under the the Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC) of the National Policy on Languages. ALAC was funded by the Commonwealth Government for the years 1987-88 and 1988-89 and it is remarkable what has been achieved in these two years. The broad goal of ALAC was "to improve levels of adult literacy in Australia" and also to promote an awareness that this issue needed to be tackled seriously by government. ALAC has undoubtedly succeeded in its aim. The funding of ALAC represented an acknowledgement by government that the issue of adult literacy was a significant one in contemporary Australia. Australian society is demanding higher literacy skills from its population and, because the proportion of adults in the population is increasing (almost 77% in 1986) the development of their literacy skills, necessary for workforce and citizenship purposes, must be made through adult literacy programs.

ALAC has comprised two elements - a states grants element and a national project element. The states grants element consists of allocations to the various systems to assist them to improve and extend their activities in this field. A sample of these activities forms the bulk of this occasional paper; these have been selected by states' representatives because they are innovative and worthwhile developments. Together they show how literacy issues relate to many different groups in the community and how they can and ought to be addressed in many different ways. The traditional image is of the volunteer tutor working in the privacy of a literacy student's home or the small group in an inner suburban or city venue of the Adult Education services. The reality is broader and much more creative though both of these ways still have an important place in offering appropriate programs to those in need of assistance with literacy.

Literacy training is provided in a variety of contexts such as workplace, media, isolated outback areas and meets the needs of various groups such as women, Aborigines, the unemployed, the disabled. These different learning arrangements are reflected in this paper.

The other component of ALAC is the national level projects. Each of these will generate publicity and attention in its own right and it is for this reason that the present document features the states grants projects. Nevertheless, the national level projects are extremely important. They will have led, by the middle of 1989, to a dramatic improvement in the quality of the data base which we have on the incidence and nature of literacy difficulties among the adult population. This will be a great boon to planning in the field especially given the imminence of the UNESCO International Literacy Year in 1990. Other projects of national significance supported by ALAC are the documentation of good practice, a survey of employer and union perceptions of the literacy and numeracy needs of workers in various industries, and a public awareness campaign, among others. The national level projects supported under ALAC are described at Appendix A.

ALAC's contribution to the many issues involved in adult literacy in Australia has been great. In one sense it is a belated recognition of the tireless work of adult literacy educators. Not only have the ALAC projects made a significant impact in their own right as a Commonwealth program, but they have also helped to draw the attention of state governments to the importance of adult literacy provision. For instance, in 1989, the second year of ALAC, the Victorian government has committed $3.4 million to an Adult Literacy and Basic Education Strategy. 1990 represents a further opportunity to focus public attention on the important issue of literacy in general and ALAC's contribution has been extremely worthwhile.

Joseph Lo Bianco
Chairman
Australian Advisory Council on Languages & Multicultural Education
Canberra, May 1989

LITERACY TRAINING AND THE WORKFORCE

NEW START - AN ADULT LITERACY/NUMERACY PROGRAM

Introduction

'I know the feeling how maddening it can be when you cant read and write. You spend a lifetime working for very little money with no hope of ever becoming a boss! The world today is not the happy place to live but when you cant read or write its a madhouse. People who feel they are living in a mad house soon finish up being a drunk or in jail and wont that cost the taxpayers some money. With this New Start program its keeping a lot of adults sober and out of jail, but most of all the happiness you can get by just reading a book. So many adults like myself are wasted to the world because of our reading difficulty and not being able to use a pen. It only means more money for everyone once we finish at this New Start school.'

(Written by Alex, a New Start student, August 1988)

Background

The ACT received $40,000 under the National Policy on Languages. The funds were allocated from the Department of Employment, Education and Training to the newly created ACT Institute of TAFE. A project team was created within the Institute to utilise these funds. The 8 members of the team were responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating the New Start project.

New Start was a pilot literacy / numeracy project which aimed to expand the provision of learning opportunities for ACT people whose levels of literacy and numeracy prevented them from pursuing vocational training or further study goals, and whose age precluded them from entering youth orientated compensatory education programs.

Some of them wanted to do further study or training, some wanted to get a job and some wanted to improve their skills so that they could enhance their personal lives and feel more self confident.

Outcomes

All students felt that their skills, confidence and self-esteem had increased significantly. One student said *'I didn't want anyone to see what I had written when I first came here, but now I don't mind at all who sees what I write.'* Another student said *'I could only read a little bit when I started, but I've read nine books now. I'm doing well.'* Still another student commented *'They used to hit me when I was at school because I couldn't spell. I didn't want anyone to know. Here it doesn't matter because we're all in the same boat. It's all a matter of confidence.'*

All students felt more optimistic about their future. Some students are planning to enter other courses that are offered in ACT TAFE, some are planning to undertake vocational training courses within the Institute, some have applied for part-time work and two students who were initially unemployed now have jobs. All students want to continue learning. As one student said : *'I've started now. I've come this far. I can't stop now.'*

New Start - The Future

It is anticipated that the program will run in 1989. At the moment a comprehensive evaluation report of the project is being prepared. The program will have a new name in 1989 because of the Government's new labour market program which is called New Start. The new name of the program is START NOW.

The New Start Project July - December 1988

The project began on 18 July at the ACT Institute of TAFE, Reid campus. As the result of a very successful advertising campaign, 103 people applied for the 24 places that were available on the program. The course was designed to meet the diverse individual needs of students. In consultation with the teacher, the students developed their own aims, objectives and literacy / numeracy program.

The New Start program offered students a maximum of 6 hours per week classroom instruction; 4 hours for literacy and 2 hours for numeracy. Students were not obliged to take both components. The course was non-assessable and students were able to leave the course when they had achieved their personal goals.

A total of 26 students enrolled in the program and 17 students completed the program from the date of their enrolment. Students were selected according to their ability to meet the target group requirements. The students came from all parts of the ACT from a wide range of backgrounds. Many of them were single parents or divorced, some were the victims of domestic violence and most of them were unemployed. All students reported negative schooling experiences and all were extremely underconfident, believing that they were the only one experiencing difficulties with literacy/numeracy. Despite these difficulties, all students had definite goals for the future.

Establishment of the Target Group

The project team believed that in the ACT:

- there was a false assumption that the population was highly literate;
- there were many people experiencing difficulties with literacy/numeracy, some of whom were employed and some unemployed;
- people under the age of 25 could access existing government programs;
- adult literacy/numeracy provision was inadequate;
- many people over 25 had definite goals for the future but were prevented from pursuing these goals because of:
  - poor literacy/numeracy skills;
  - unemployment or under employment;
  - severe financial restrictions.

Given these beliefs, the team felt that New Start could best help ACT people who were:

- over the age of 25;
- aspiring to self improvement, employment, vocational training or further study;
- unemployed, or on a limited income and unable to pay current ACT TAFE fees and charges.

Conclusion

'And the buses here you know, I'm startin' to understand what it says - like Woden and Civic - instead of having to ask someone which bus I'm gunna catch. I can do that now, no trouble at all now - what you've showed me.'

(A statement from Peter, a New Start student , December 1988.)

Neil Baudinette, Institute of TAFE, ACT

TAKING BASIC EDUCATION TO WORK

Adult Education in Tasmania has been running the Adult Literacy program for eleven years. In July 1988 we embarked on the Workplace Basic Education Project - a scheme whereby we would have classes in reading, writing, oral communication and basic mathematics for workers during work time, in the workplace and, for the pilot project, with funds made available through the National Policy on Languages. Such learning would be in a context of life or work related interests.

The aims were to develop a workplace basic education philosophy and practice that would be responsive to the changing needs of industry and society; to design a literacy and numeracy program to improve the basic education of working people, enhancing their sense of self-worth, and enabling them to participate in reskilling programs; to select three or four workplaces in piloting the project; to conduct small classes operating for two hours a week for fifteen weeks in work time; and to evaluate the program with a view to operating an extended program in 1989.

The participating organisations welcomed the offer of classes as being timely in the union negotiations that involve worker opportunity for retraining; as an opportunity to enhance worker morale, develop employees'possibilities for promotion opportunities, and improve workplace efficiency. The project was discussed with personnel and training staff. Planning groups were formed consisting of representatives of the participating organisations, unions, project staff and later, students.

Recruiting of students started with shopfloor word-of-mouth, shopfloor meetings of workers and project staff, use of existing staff development programs and through union stewards. Management, although enthusiastic and cooperative, had not been encouraging with its predictions of 'a few' or 'maybe five' enrolments. Attendance at recruitment sessions were: 13 at the Department of Main Roads, 30 at Electrolytic Zinc, 61 at the hospital.

The success of this project depended a great deal on the tutors. Not only had they to be familiar with the practices and principles of adult learning (part of normal tutor training), they also needed ability and experience with group work and an ability to enter the factory, mix readily with the workers and be familiar enough with their world to understand their educational needs.

The classes got off to a good start - some students even attended on days off. It was important to let students know how adult basic education works as they sometimes expect a very structured course, but their confidence grew quickly and their sense of shared learning was a real strength. As the classes proceeded they discovered more that they wanted to learn.

The outcomes so far for the students have been a growing sense of confidence and experience of decision-making, choices, goal-setting and reviewing. The literacy students voiced a desire to do some maths so that they could better understand their own jobs and feel 'less like robots'.

They wanted to understand the basic principles of levelling, measurement, area etc. The co-ordinator arranged for a Department of Main Roads engineer to visit the class to explain technical concepts. The visit was very successful and was followed by applying literacy skills to the concepts that the engineer had talked about.

Maths classes were structured on basic instruction augmented by worksheets and practical experience in, for example, measurement. Metrics and basic functions of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division were key issues. The students enjoyed challenges in area, percentages, volume and averages (cricket scores).

Most enjoyed not having to travel to learn and were grateful to learn in an unstressed environment. All were eager to learn, all saw any education as beneficial and would like to keep going. The age differences and varied experiences were an asset. They had fun.

As the program develops, the capacity for the basic facets to be soundly in place must be ensured - strong tutor support, consistent negotiation with management and unions, sound reporting, personal attention to individual students and financial security.

Elizabeth Compton, Adult Education, TAFE, Tasmania

THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

With the increasing communication demands of today's technological age, many people who not long ago would have entered the workforce in unskilled or semi-skilled positions, now find that they have insufficient communication skills and have joined the ranks of the unemployed. Others have found that they require retraining, but most retraining programs assume a high level of literacy.

In order to provide effective spoken and written language courses for the unemployed and under-employed, it is necessary to have information regarding workplace communication requirements.

Queensland Council of Adult Literacy's research on communication requirements in the workplace intends to concentrate on:

- defining the nature of communication in the workplace, and
- investigating a methodology for assessing communication in a specified workplace and in a specified job.

The research involves a literature review of studies of communication in the workplace and a discussion of the findings from observations and interviews with employees in the specified workplace.

Rationale

One of the most important skills required by employees at all levels is effective communication. This skill varies according to the occupation within the industry, the position held within the organisation, and the status of those involved in the communication. It would appear that employers are only beginning to realise that employees may have problems in communicating through spoken and written language in the workplace.

A further indication of possible workplace communicative problems is given by the increasing number of people in adult literacy programs who give job related reasons for enrolment.

Workplaces are complex, dynamic, social systems which are characterised by the interactions of employees within the system. This involves the role, status and communicative competence of the employees. It is suggested that the workplace provides substantial contextual support for communication and that employees use a variety of problem solving strategies to help them resolve problems that arise in communicating, whether through spoken or written language or indeed through other symbolic systems.

Methodology

The goal of the proposed research project is to examine communication in one particular workplace, a surburban supermarket. It is intended to observe communication in a social context focusing on use of language, use of metacognitive strategies, communication networks and contextual support, using naturalistic methods of inquiry.

The emphasis will be on the observation of variables in the social setting of the workplace and the analysis of the interrelationships, both causal and consequential among such factors. Participant observation of one specific area, the checkout operators, and of data collection, including interviews with key informants, will be conducted over a period of time.

Current status of the research

The literature review has been completed and an initial study has been conducted in order to obtain an overview of communication in the selected workplace. This has enabled the researcher to focus the investigation and develop an appropriate research methodology. Stage 2 of the research, data collection, commenced in March.

Jean Searle, Queensland Council for Adult Literacy

LITERACY COMPETENCE OF YOUNG SCHOOL LEAVERS

The aim of the project is to ascertain how well young school leavers at risk can handle Australian English for vocational purposes. The target population is those young people who, within 12 months of leaving school, are having difficulty in finding stable employment through Commonwealth Employment Service offices in Brisbane, Queensland.

The project is in response to the following observations made by SPELD(Specific Learning Difficulties)QLD INC over some 11 years :

- There is little published or available data on the prevalence of literacy problems in people who have completed their schooling.
- Anecdotal and media evidence suggesting that employer organisations, CES officers and educators are concerned that there is too high a level of literacy problems amongst school leavers and adults.
- Many parents approach SPELD Qld Inc to seek help for their children who are not progressing as well as they could in the fundamental tasks of using Australian English - these parents are very concerned for the future of their children.
- There is evidence to suggest that young people do not seek help with problems in literacy until they are in their mid-twenties, whether from SPELD organisations, from other community-based providers or from the more formal settings of TAFE Colleges.
- The economic revival being sought by governments is based on training and upgrading of skills. There is a dramatic increase in the need for all workers to be more competent at using Australian English, especially since there is a considerable reduction in the numbers of jobs requiring low levels of language competence.
- The adult clients of SPELD Qld Inc report that their literacy problems have produced increasing senses of failure and frustration as they become older, in relation to employability, family and social contexts.

A Steering Committee was established, with representatives from DEET, TAFE, the Queensland Council for Adult Literacy, the Schonell Educational Research Centre of the University of Queensland, and SPELD Qld Inc. Members were selected because they had something to contribute to the overall design and monitoring of the project, and, more importantly, because they each had expertise, interests or contributions to make to individual sections of the project, for example expertise in testing for literacy, facilitating access to CES officers and clients.

A range of tests was evaluated - the number of these was remarkably few, given the presumed importance of, and wide-spread interest in, the general question of literacy in adults. No tests were found which suited the project's target population, either because they were not couched in Australian English or else because they were related too specifically to non-Australian contexts or to gender. A set of tests was created by the Steering Committee, to enable some trial work to be done with a selected CES office and its clients. The trial, conducted by two part-time researchers with expertise in adult literacy, revealed that the readily-given co-operation of CES managers and officers was

essential to the project, and that it was difficult to attract the attention of the young people who were most at risk. The initial tests did not prove to be entirely satisfactory, based as they were on texts from other standard tests, but the trial overall established a basis for a final design.

A new approach to testing is almost finalised, based on the abilities of young people at risk to read, recall and use the brochures available through the CES Career Reference Centre in Brisbane. These documents are in two series, one for higher level employment (technician, teacher) and the other for employment in less-skilled occupations. The language and layout of the brochures in the two series are markedly different in complexity and intent, and therefore will provide an initial screening device in the testing schedule.

It is hoped to test 100 Skillshare - a Commonwealth government vocational training program - clients for abilities to read, recall, spell and write, the latter being based on a simple application for one of the jobs selected from the CES career brochures. As well, it is anticipated that CES/Skillshare officers will be surveyed to gain information on the need for 'remedial' help in literacy for their young clients.

SPELD Qld Inc

EXPANSION OF LITERACY SERVICES

Some country areas of South Australia are experiencing economic crisis leading to the relocation of families and the re-entry of farmers and their families to the paid labour force. This aim is being addressed by six new appointments which have been made to country TAFE Colleges. These are at Pt Pirie, Whyalla, Pt Augusta, Murray Bridge, Riverland and the South East.

The new positions will enable a collaborative development of literacy provision with a range of community groups. This will also enable the development of more adequate referral and co-operative literacy services among practitioners from the Advanced English Program, the Adult Migrant Education Service and Adult Literacy .

- Five new appointments made to metropolitan colleges will also enable work with community groups to develop literacy provision outside TAFE.
- The appointment of a full-time state field officer will enable appropriate staff induction and development and effective networking to be established throughout the state, linking TAFE and Community groups.
- Co-operative arrangements have resulted in resources in TAFE being released to undertake new initiatives such as: literacy in the workplace, curriculum development eg the Introductory Vocational Education Certificate, and trialling of general education modules at colleges.

Linda Are, Adelaide College of TAFE

LITERACY TRAINING AND THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA

ADULT LITERACY THROUGH VIDEO

The Adult Literacy Through Video Project (ALTVP) was the result of a decision by all Adult Literacy providers in New South Wales to pool a major portion of their respective allocations to fund one project. The project is also partially funded under another program (States Grants).

The aim of the project is to produce a series of videos to help adults learn some reading and writing skills in their own homes. The videos will be designed primarily for distribution through the home video market, although they will also be available through public libraries, community centres and refuges, as well as through government agencies such as TAFE, the Commonwealth employment Service and the Department of Corrective Services.

The design problems presented by the project are an enormous challenge. Video as a medium for learning is not obviously conducive to encouraging learner autonomy or control. We know that adults (and probably children) learn best when they can choose what and how they learn. Particularly in the context of literacy, the use of video seems to fly in the face of everything we know about adult education. In the last issue of VOX, Noel Simpson said '*..adult literacy activities need to be tailored to the person ... Early tuition needs to take place one-to-one or in small groups* ..'. So why are we setting off down this mass media path ?

The answer is in order to reach the vast majority of adult non-readers in this community who do not use the more tailored, individually oriented programs. The people we hope will make use of the videos include prisoners, shift workers, seasonal workers, Aborigines, people of non-English speaking background, the house-bound including the aged and the disabled, parents with young children and young people who have left school early.

The videos are aimed at people who are either unable or unwilling to make use of adult literacy education provisions. Our challenge is to find ways to make video work for these people, because this may be the first or even only opportunity they have to open the doors to literacy.

We have no illusions that non-readers will become readers solely as a result of watching these videos. We do believe that we can show people strategies for coping when they are confronted with the need to read or write. We also believe that success in using such strategies can help people to develop more realistic and confident attitudes towards learning reading and writing.

There are ways of designing video programs to encourage viewer interaction and active learning. This will be the essence of the programs - practical examples and positive role models. The process of determining the format for this series involves consultation with a range of people including current students, literacy teachers and educational resource designers. 'On the Move', a broadcast literacy series developed by the BBC some 15 years ago has also proved very useful - as much as anything for the strategies it teaches us to avoid.

We have a long way to go before the design format is finalized, but we do have a picture emerging, and have faith that the rest will follow.

So far we believe that drama is likely to be the best overall approach. The reasons are:

1. Drama will allow us to gain the interest and confidence of the viewer by portraying characters and situations which will be familiar to the adult non-reader. It also allows us to portray good role models.

   It is likely that each program will be a story based on an individual needing to solve literacy difficulties in a particular context. Contexts for the different programs may include topics such as dealing with schools on behalf of kids, dealing with the health system, legal system etc.

2. Drama also allows us to illustrate strategies for resolving or coping with literacy linked crisis. An example of this is how someone might learn to cope when handed a form to be filled in on the spot. 'I left my glasses at home' is an old and very useful strategy, but may result in an extra trip home. Carrying a card with all the critical information written out can be very useful, as most forms ask for similar information. Moving away to a more private counter reduces the stress and makes it easier to fill out those parts of the form that can be recognised and copied form the card. A partially completed form can then be returned to the counter, and a request for help in filling out the more difficult questions is likely to be less embarrassing.

   The main drawback of using a dramatic format is that the level and detail of the educational material is limited. We cannot afford to produce programs which only raise people's awareness and encourage them to enrol in literacy courses. This is true, firstly and most simply because existing Adult Literacy provisions couldn't possible meet the demand, but secondly because geographical and other considerations of isolation also mean that a proportion of our intended audience are unable to attend courses, even if they were willing. The videos have to be a learning resource. Using a whole language approach, we have identified a number of intended learning outcomes for the programs which will include both short term coping strategies and long term learning strategies for reading and writing. At the time of writing we have yet to determine how to integrate them into the dramatic flow of the programs.

The videos will be supported by workbooks which will provide exercises for students to practise skills and strategies introduced in the videos. The workbooks will be available through public libraries, TAFE and other government agencies. Each video will also include a message to viewers inviting them to call a 008 toll free number to obtain further information about literacy programs and to be sent a copy of the workbook.

The entire series will be promoted through a high profile electronic media campaign. It is also planned to introduce and promote the use of the series through regional seminars for community organisations, libraries, local councils etc. It is planned to launch the first of the videos on International Literacy Day in September 1989. Subsequent videos are to be released progressively as they are completed. All programs will be available in video stores early in 1990 - International Literacy Year.

Marie Persson, NSW Film and Television Office

THE ADULT LITERACY COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR REGIONAL TV STATIONS

The following account of this project by Carla Becker of THE SUN HERALD appeared on 11 December 1988.

AD CAMPAIGN FIGHTS ILLITERACY IN COUNTRY.

You probably take for granted the ability to read this article.

Yet in Australia, a disturbing one million adults (16 years and over) have trouble with basic reading and writing.

Country people figure predominantly in these statistics. Although an official evaluation of illiteracy problems has not been compiled for some time, going on figures for just one of the bodies who offer help - the NSW External College of TAFE's, adult basic education department - 45 per cent of students enrolled in the literacy and numeracy course are from rural areas of NSW.

Help is also available through State TAFE colleges, which offer face-to-face tutoring in basic reading and writing.

It is this adult education program that is the subject of an advertisement to be shown on all regional television stations in NSW during 1990 - International Literacy Year - Featuring Real Australia columnist Mike Hayes, the ad was shot at a shearing shed, a location familiar to many country people, and at a basic education class at Goulburn.

The organiser of the promotion is the adult literacy officer for the Southern Highlands area, Ursula Stephens. She said last week the ad would be screened to promote awareness of adult literacy problems and courses that can help.

'1990 has been declared as the United Nations International Literacy Year, so this is all preliminary work so we can really go gung ho from the beginning of the year and raise community awareness,' Ms Stephens said.

'It is very difficult to advertise adult literacy programs in a way that country people identify with.

'Most community service announcements are fairly static and fairly metropolitan-orientated. We wanted something that would be really different and catch the student's eye in the country and sort of motivate them to find out a bit more about it.'

Funding for the promotion has been provided under the National Languages Policy, a Federal Government initiative.

In the Southern Highlands area, which includes Moss Vale, Goulburn, Crookwell, Braidwood, Yass, Queanbeyan, Gunning and Cooma, there are 200 adult literacy students. They are taught by 30 specially-trained volunteer tutors, five full-time and 20 part-time teachers.

Ms Stephens said there is no such thing as a "typical student" as students come from all age groups, have a wide range of intelligence, personalities, background, life experiences, interests and occupations.

General trends show there are slightly more men than women students, and most are under 40 years old. Only one-third of students have no reading or writing skills at all, a third have limited skills and another third may be competent, but have trouble with spelling or mathematics.

Their reasons for enrolling to improve their literacy skills are varied. Some wish to improve job prospects; help their children with schoolwork; or have a particular reason such as passing their driving test.

The advertisement is now completed. It is a one-minute Community Service Announcement which can be shown on commercial television stations without charge. The video was launched at the 1989 Adult Literacy Conference at Goulburn in April, and discussions are now taking place as to the most appropriate way to organise air play.

Ursula Stephens, Goulburn TAFE

LITERACY TRAINING IN ISOLATED AREAS

Western Australia's vast distances create special problems for the provision and support of literacy programmes and the sharing of information and resources.

Initiatives which address these problems include the provision of a toll-free number for student and tutor enquiries, the use of teleconferencing for community co-ordinators' meetings and the development, by the TAFE External Studies College, of open learning packages for literacy and numeracy.

Tutor training has been conducted for the first time at Karratha where a volunteer tutor scheme is now flourishing and twenty students are receiving one-to-one tuition. New groups such as this will have access to one of three mobile resource units - specially designed lockable mobile shelves which have been fitted with a variety of books, teaching materials and games, calculators, tape recorders, a lap-top computer and software.

Once a group is established and has acquired resources, the mobile unit is despatched to a new venue. Existing groups can also borrow the mobiles to complement their own resources for short periods of time.

Cherrie Hawke, TAFE, Adult Literacy, WA

LITERACY TRAINING IN RESIDENCE

Christopher Stewart and Rosa McKenna report on the first residential writing weekend for Victorian adult literacy students, held at Avalon, near Geelong, on 23-25 October 1987.

This residential writing activity was designed to give participants an opportunity to spend a concentrated period of time developing their writing skills, and also to spend time with other students in a relaxed atmosphere.

The weekend was organised by Regional Adult Literacy Coordinators and financed by a grant of $3,000 from a private source, the Lance Reischstein Charitable Foundation, in response to a submission from the organisers through the Carringbush Regional Library.

Planning was carried out over a six-month period. Possible funding sources were located and a submission compiled. Detailed planning extended over an eight-week period and included publicity, finding tutors and processing applications.

Publicity began with letters to all literacy coordinators, who were asked to distribute flyers to all their students. About 120 applications were received for the 32 available places. Many students rang the organiser in support of their application and this was viewed as appropriate lobbying (more emphasis was placed on this than on coordinators ringing on students' behalf). After discussion, a limit of one student per program was decided on and a fair balance between men and women achieved.

Tutors were approached and the seven eventually involved included voluntary tutors, tutors from Community Programs, the CAE, the Workplace Basic Education Program and teachers from TAFE Colleges. Some worked in a 'team teaching' arrangement and a variety of workshops were available for students to choose from. There were four work groups focussing on:

- autobiographical writing;
- imaginative writing;
- ideas for getting started;
- developing and editing a piece of writing.

Some crossover was possible. Students made their choice on Friday night after introductions and the evening meal, but in future weekends the choice will be deferred until Saturday morning to give more time to decide. In this weekend about half the students chose just one of the workgroups, and others were led by initial nervousness to 'play safe' and choose a group which demanded less of them - a choice they later felt they regretted.

Results

People quickly got to know each other and most relaxed quickly enough to enjoy themselves and take part in the sessions. Being away from the usual demands of home or work was a real help to learning:

> *'I have found that the weekend has helped me to sit down and concentrate more than any other time.'* (Joe).
>
> *'It's easy to study here.'* (Russell).

The intensity offered by the residential setting helped generate more of the enthusiasm and excitement that was a feature of the weekend. The students' evaluation indicated a strong preference for a residential weekend (or longer) away from home for future events.

The returned student evaluation sheets indicated other outcomes:

1. Specific improved skills

> *'We learned how to bring the flow in our writing more precise and freely.'* (Anna);
>
> *'One of the things I picked up ... was ... use more descriptive, specific words. Now I'm thinking, looking at everyday things and ... thinking of words to describe them.'* (Stephen).

2. Changes in attitude to writing

> *'I know my spelling wasn't very good. I've never considered myself as a writer. I've always thought I can't do that and that's that. Then this opportunity came up, people encourage you in class to write. I was terrified. I haven't done any writing for seven years, I found at first it was a bit difficult but once you got going I was rapt. It was really good.'* (Christina).
>
> *'I've written a poem! Listen to this mate. What do you think? Isn't it great!?* (Russell).

3. Working with others, understanding they are not alone

> *'I've never seen people encourage each other so much. Out in the world I try not to allow people to know I have difficulties in spelling and writing and through all this we completely let our guards down and said 'Hey, it's okay'. I just think that everyone was very courageous. They put everything they had on the line.'* (Christina).

4. Increased confidence

> Many students wrote or spoke of this. For some this was through overcoming their nervousness at meeting new people or speaking in a group. For others confidence was gained by sharing a difficult task, completing a piece of writing that pleased them, by improved skill with words and language and more control over how and what they learnt.

The reading evening on Saturday night was an example of growing confidence. Most students read their day's work aloud to the rest of the participants. This was entirely optional, and often required considerable courage. Seeing other people attempt it gave the confidence to try.

5. Awareness of other educational possibilities

A different experience of learning and meeting new tutors and coordinators meant that some students were able to compare different ways of learning and other educational possibilities.

A number of students who participated in the weekend have now moved on to more advanced courses, and the writing weekend may have contributed to this.

6. Social contacts

Some students made friendships which have continued through joint outings and exchanges of letters, and all students found the friendly atmosphere at the weekend very conducive to learning. The social enjoyment provided by the weekend was an integral part of its success. Learning also continued after the weekend, partly through letter writing.

Tutor Reaction

Tutors found the Writing Weekend 'richly rewarding', 'not long enough', 'exciting' and all expressed interest in participating in future writing events. Continuous sessions with the same students was a positive feature which allowed tutors to develop their approaches. Both tutors and students felt rewarded through the process of starting, polishing, completing and sharing their writing.

A drawback was lack of adequate briefing before the weekend. In retrospect the weekend was understaffed and another group plus extra helpers including a full-time typist and photocopier would have improved the weekend for the tutors.

The writing produced at this weekend will be published in a small booklet.

The main conclusion of students and tutors, and a strong recommendation of the organisers was, 'There should be more weekends like this one!'

Chris Stewart & Rosa McKenna, Division of TAFE, Dept of Education, Victoria

LITERACY TRAINING AND ABORIGINES

ABORIGINAL READING RESOURCES

The Aboriginal Reading Resources Project was a joint submission from the Adult Literacy Information Office and the State Aboriginal Land Council in NSW. An amount of $44,000 has been allocated to the Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council.

The Project has involved recording local oral histories of the Western Regional Aboriginal Community, collating it and preparing it for publication. Two books have been produced:

. *Legend of the Galah and the Frill Necked Lizard* - a local legend, and

. *Life Story of Eliza Kennedy* - the oral history of an 80 year old woman of the community.

The purpose of documenting oral histories is to motivate other Aboriginal communities to write and record their local histories and expand the supply of relevant and accessible Aboriginal reading material.

Susan Sim, Adult Literacy Information Office, NSW

PROJECT READ

The University of the Northern Territory offers a program called 'Project Read', which provides one-to-one tutoring for functionally illiterate adults, including Aboriginal people.

Jennifer Snape, an Aboriginal part-time tutor, has been able to offer a greater insight into the literacy/numeracy problems experienced by Aboriginal students. She attended the volunteer tutor training program along with the numeracy workshops and has observed lessons with the co-ordinator. She has also read relevant materials and has developed materials for use specifically with Aboriginal students.

To recruit students, Mrs Snape has visited a variety of community organisations letting Aboriginal people know about Project Read and has also made use of her own personal network to advise Aboriginals of literacy/numeracy assistance available. She has also been interviewed on the Aboriginal program that goes to air on the ABC radio and 8 TOP FM. It is envisaged that this type of publicity activity will continue in the future.
Furthermore posters advertising services which have been designed to appeal specifically to Aboriginals for display within the wider community have been printed.

The six Aboriginal students currently working with Mrs Snape for ten hours instruction per week are interested in further study and see Project Read as a non-threatening entry point into the post-school education field. One such student has since moved on to undertake clerical studies here at the University.

Julia Knight, Northern Territory University

LITERACY TRAINING AND WOMEN

WOMEN AND WORK LITERACY RESOURCE KIT

The *Women and Work* Literacy Resource kit, as developed by the Adult Literacy Information Office, in New South Wales, provides stimulus materials around the common theme of women's vocational and educational opportunities in Australian society. The kit is divided into six units:

1) Work and Women's Work

2) Women in the Workplace

3) Women and Technology

4) Job Seeking Skills

5) Her Story

6) Images of Working Women.

These Resources aim to build upon and develop literacy skills including speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as raising critical awareness of issues of work and equal educational opportunities. There are opportunities for students to examine concepts such as the impact of technology on work, women's work and workplace practices; the socio-cultural and socio-political influences on working in Australian society; and the barriers to women's participation in education and employment.

The kit is designed as a progressive whole, but any part or theme can be used as an end in itself.

Students from Aboriginal and non-English speaking backgrounds as well as students in adult literacy and women's programs would find these resources useful.

LITERACY TRAINING AND THE DISABLED

LITERACY FOR THE INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED

Project Read in The Northern Territory also provides resources for the disabled

Inese Wittich, tutor in this area since August 1988, caters for ten such students, providing one to one instruction for three students for one and a half hours per week and catering for a group of seven students for a three and a half hour session per week. She is assisted in the group session by a volunteer tutor. In addition, Mrs Wittich has been allocated two hours per week to develop suitable materials which are also available for all tutors to use.

In the group sessions, the program includes practical tasks, general literacy development, numeracy and money skills, social skills and general education, eg current affairs. Students in this area were recruited from Kokoda Industries, a sheltered workshop, and from students already attending Project Read. Students are also encouraged to use literacy computer programs.

It is envisaged that future developments in this area might include the development of a semester course package on Life Skills and Adult Basic Education for the mildly intellectually disabled, run over four or five mornings per week. This could then attract a new group each semester whilst allowing participants to repeat if necessary. Such a course offered at a mainstream institution would benefit these students' self-esteem and personal development, as well as meet their important educational needs.

STUDENT GROUP SUPPORT PROJECT

In 1986 and 1987 a group of students attached to Prahran TAFE Adult Literacy Unit worked towards developing group identity and purpose. Many of them, being physically disabled or having experienced long term unemployment, suffered greatly from shyness or lack of confidence and consequently were inarticulate.

The group decided to change its focus from being activities oriented to being outcomes oriented. Decisions which had to be made about the project included the following:

- applying for a grant to employ two half-time student workers to support the group with leadership and to work actively towards seeding other group action across the state;
- developing a job brief for the student worker positions and identifying key selection criteria;

- Selecting the interview panel and deciding on the procedures to be adopted. It is worth noting that, of the two students on the interview panel, one had never been in waged employment and the other had experienced a series of short term factory jobs. Being on the selection panel was therefore a new learning experience which both students performed with integrity and sensitivity.
- Electing the three student representatives to the Advisory Committee which was set up to support the student workers and to oversee the project.
- Encouraging students from the group to seek elected positions on outside committees. For example, the Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education Council's General Committee.

From these experiences flowed:

- a sense of confidence;
- a feeling of success;
- an inclination to take risks, initially as a group, then as individuals;
- knowledge about how to plan in the short and long terms;
- an ability to collect and store acquired information and contacts;
- networking and public awareness activities and promotion of Student Action;
- attempts to develop student-centred and student-determined policies, working structures and accountability procedures; and
- requests for specific training, for example, workshops on: reading and using street directories and transport timetables ; assertion skills ; preparing and laying out a flier advertising events as well as developing other administrative and organisational skills.

Despite difficulties in achieving such significant outcomes, the project is now in a position to go from strength to strength, and is operating as an alternative mode of delivering Adult Literacy and Basic Education.

Sharon Coates, Project Manager, Victoria

APPENDIX A

Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC) National Level Projects for 1987-88

1. Research on the Nature of Literacy Difficulties in the Adult Population - phase 3 of a study by the Sydney Institute of Technical and Adult Teacher Education is a full scale survey of levels of literacy in the adult population of Australia.

2. The Documentation and Dissemination of Good Practice in Adult Literacy Provision - production of occasional papers and booklets by the Tasmanian TAFE Authority (described in more detail below).

3. Study of Outcomes of Adult Literacy Programs - research undertaken by the Department of Continuing Education, University of New England involving collection and analysis of data on the aims and outcomes of adult literacy programs across Australia.

4. Survey of Employer and Union Perceptions of Literacy / Numeracy Needs of Employees - the project explores the literacy / numeracy needs of the workforce in the current climate of Australia's need for development of its skills base and preparation of a more flexible and productive workforce. Through AACLAME the project is supported by the Business Council of Australia and the ACTU.

5. A contribution to the UNESCO Sub-regional Adult Literacy Workshop - a two day Asia-Pacific sub-regional workshop on adult literacy.

ALAC National Level Projects for 1988-89

1. A Public Awareness Campaign relating to Adult Literacy Programs - co-ordination, promotion and publicising of the various activities in government-funded adult literacy programs, to be carried out by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL).

2. Participation of the Non-government Sector in International Literacy Year - a 3 day national symposium to be organised by ACAL. The symposium will draw together representatives from the adult literacy sector, relevant community agencies such as the ACTU and the business sector and key education personnel as part of a planning process.

3. An evaluation of the Effectiveness of Technology for Adult Literacy Tuition - the use of items of technology such as computers, telecoference facilities, audio and video materials and the new Lexiphon is increasingly being considered in different teaching contexts. There is a need to explore the parameters within which items of technology can be effectively used to meet the learning needs of different categories of learners. There is also a need to analyse and compare the merits and potential of different items of technology.

4. Establishment of a Research Base for Evaluation of Adult Literacy Methodology and Measurement of Proficiency and Progress of Adult Literacy Learners - the project will provide a theoretical model of adult literacy learning drawing on classroom and/or student based research in the Australian context. It will examine the process involved in the acquisition of literacy skills by adults, appropriate learning environments for adult students and effective indicators for assessing progress.

5. A Contrastive Evaluation of Two Alternative Models of Literacy and Numeracy Provision for the Unemployed. The project will examine a number of pre-vocational and vocational literacy programs in different states. Studies in the U.K. indicate that programs for the long-term unemployed concentrating initially on literacy and numeracy skills are more successful than those where the literacy and numeracy input is integrated with the vocational course.

6. Preparation for the Establishment of a National Adult Literacy Referral Service - to improve the availability of information about adult literacy programs. The service would be used by people wanting to volunteer their services as tutors and by those wanting to improve their literacy skills. Stage one of the project would centralise information on programs throughout Australia.

7. The continuation of the Documentation and Dissemination of Good Practice in Adult Literacy Provision - examples of good teaching practice in adult literacy have been developed in Australia over a number of years. Recent work has demonstrated that a large amount of material exists which is suitable for dissemination and which should be publicised. This project is to be continued by the Tasmanian TAFE Authority.

APPENDIX B

ALAC FUNDED PROJECTS IN STATES AND TERRITORIES

NEW SOUTH WALES:

Expanded Provision of Learning Opportunities - 29 projects including :

Literacy provision for female ex-offenders

Off-campus computer assisted reading and writing for disabled students

Trialling of classes for adults with acquired dysphasia

Aboriginal general skills - use of drama as a literacy motivator

Work-seeking for Arabic-speaking males

Women, literacy and employment

Development and Acquisition of Course Material and Equipment - 29 projects including :

Resource kit for students in gaol

Self-paced training package in adult basic education

Off-campus computer-assisted reading and writing for disabled students

Practical language activities for trade and community students

Literacy and numeracy for young people through computer access

Curriculum Development and Research - 7 projects including :

Research into the literacy and training needs of the unemployed

Survey of the literacy needs of NSW prisoners

Needs analysis for Aborigines in the Hunter region

Staff Development - 9 projects including :

Plain English Campaign

Numeracy staff development package

Gender specific issues in adult literacy

Staff development for isolated teachers in corrective services

VICTORIA

ALAC funds will be spent on the following projects :

Program development for hearing impaired and visually impaired students

Research, curriculum and staff development on basic numeracy for adults

Aboriginal education

Investigation of technology and education related to an ALAC national level project

Research and staff development in association with other agencies such as trade unions and with school literacy projects

A major professional development initiative involving workshops, seminars, working parties, mini-conferences and a state conference

An adult literacy and basic education information and services office for course materials and equipment, curriculum development and staff development.

QUEENSLAND

ALAC funds will be used to allow Queensland TAFE to consolidate provision of small group and individual tuition at TAFE and community locations, including professional development for teachers, course material and equipment to support these courses.

There will also be an expansion of the adult literacy information service including management of information and materials development projects, collecting and disseminating literacy information and materials , training and staff development, production of 'Great Barrier Reef' high quality kits for adult readers and the development of a distance tutor training course with suitable support materials.

Research into issues in adult literacy will include workplace literacy and literacy and numeracy requirements of youth attempting to enter or re-enter the workforce.

TAFE will also promote International Literacy Year in 1990.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

ALAC funds will be used for expanded provision of learning opportunities as follows:

In TAFE there will be increased college provision, additional country volunteers, an information service using a 008 telephone number and an information video on establishment of country tutor groups, and the setting up and trialling of a workplace literacy model.

In the non TAFE area there will be workplace classes for the disabled and prison literacy pilot project.

In curriculum development there will be materials for tutor teletraining and a drivers' literacy kit.

In staff development there will be community co-ordinators' teleconferences and a tutor teletraining course.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ALAC funds will allow permanent employment of adult literacy staff. This in turn will allow stronger links with the Commonwealth Employment Service and Job Entry Training programs.

Specific proposals are as follows:

Expansion of literacy services in country areas

Work based outreach programs to workers in the southern industrial areas with low levels of literacy.

A community literacy program for parents as an attempt to break the illiteracy cycle

Development of referral and co-operative literacy services between Advanced English, Adult Migrant Education Service and adult literacy practitioners.

Development of mechanisms of referral and literacy support for the unemployed through liaison with CES and other agencies.

Development of full and part time courses rather than classes in basic adult education for students entering vocational courses

In general, expanded provsion will allow working together with existing community programs to establish independent community based programs through libraries, health centres and enighbourhood houses. It will also raise community awareness and participation by working with service groups.

TASMANIA

ALAC funds will be used to maintain and develop projects from the previous year.

The Workplace Basic Education project will be extended to 6 other workplaces. The objectives are as follows :

- to improve the basic skills of working people
- to improve workplace productivity and enable participation in reskilling programs
- to develop a workplace basic education philosophy and practice which is responsive to the varying needs of industry and society
- to encourage industry to assume responsibility for funding basic education programs.

The Resources Development Project will continue to identify and develop appropriate learning materials for adults tackling basic reading, writing, maths and survival skills, to provide a statewide service to Adult Literacy and Basic Education centres for the development of their materials, to refine a time efficient procedure to produce quality, low-cost materials, to maintain a catalogue of the resources available statewide and to evaluate the hardware and software, themselves resources for adult student learning.

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

ALAC funds will be used for :

- Project Read, allowing greater contact time per student, small group programs focusing on special needs in common, the capacity to cater for students in the Darwin rural areas and a collection of reading material with relevance to the Northern Territory.
- Literacy Programs for Adult Migrants, allowing the continuation of English literacy programs for adults from a non-English speaking background.
- Literacy Programs for Adult Aborigines at the NT Open College of TAFE, allowing the continuation of literacy programs in a number of community centres across the Territory, following the Initial Literacy Program developed by the Open College.

THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ALAC funds will be used for a continuation of the ACT Institute of TAFE's START NOW program, previously known as NEW START. The program increases literacy and numeracy provision to meet demand, offsets current TAFE fees and charges for the disadvantaged and increases community awareness of both literacy/numeracy problems and of the provision available. Although successful in meeting objectives in the previous year NEW START could cater for only 25% of expressed demand.

APPENDIX C

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